(vi) The outstanding boys and girls are provided scholarships so that they can have nutritious diet, sports equipment support and be able to pursue sports as a career. Scholarships are also given for research in sports.

(vii) Assistance for purchase of equipment, scientific support and training and participation within the country and abroad under the 'Scheme relating to Talent Search and Training' and the 'National Sports Development Fund'.

(viii) With a view to broad basing of sports and scouting for talent at a young age, the Government is assisting Army under 'Army Boys Sports Company Scheme' (ABSC). In additional to eight existing ABSCs, ten more ABSCs have been sanctioned during the current year.

25 Navodaya Vidyalayas have been approved to be included in the National Talent Search Contest Scheme (NTSC) during the current year.

Standard of Football

452. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal with Government to increase the standards of football at the college and university level in the country;

(b) whether it is a fact that India has never been able to make a mark in the Olympics in football;

(c) the reasons for not even trying to encourage our youth to take up football which is a low capital intensive sport;

(d) whether any alternate football governing body will be floated to encourage youngsters to take up football; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS (SHRI SUNIL DUTT): (a) Football is one of the identified disciplines under various schemes of the Sports Authority of India (SAI) under which the sportspersons with potential are selected and admitted in SAI Sports Centres for regular training in this discipline. At present, 1191 football players in the age group

raning from 8 to 21 years are getting training in 48 SAI Sports Centres throughout the country.

As per information received from the All India Football Federation (AIFF), various steps are being taken by AIFF to encourage football at youth level. Inter-State championships for boys in Under 13, 16, 19 and 21 categories and for girls in Under 17 and 19 categories are being held. Besides this, selection and training camps are held at Zonal & National level. In fact, India Youth (Boys) teams are ranked between 12 and 16 among the 44 countries in Asia. Again, India Youth (Girls) team is ranked between 6 and 10 in Asia.

In addition to the above, this Ministry, under its existing scheme of "Grants for Promotion of Sports in Universities & Colleges" provides financial assistance to general colleges and universities, colleges of physical education, engineering colleges, agriculture colleges/universities and medical colleges for development of various sports infrastructure including football playfield on sharing basis of 75:25 for special category states and 50:50 for other states. Financial assistance of upto Rs. 3.00 lakhs is also available for purchase of non-consumable sports equipment. Financial assistance is also provided to the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) for organization of inter-university tournaments for various sports disciplines. However, the above centrally sponsored scheme is proposed to be transferred to state sector with effect from 1.4.2005.

(b) India's best performance in the Football discipline in the Olympics was in 1956 when the Indian team reached fourth place. However, after the qualifying rounds were introduced after the 1960 Olympics, India participated in the qualifying rounds but has not qualified for the football competition during the Olympics games.

(c) Does not arise in view of facts at (a) above.

(d) This is within the purview of AIFF which has informed that there is no proposal to float any alternate body. However, youth football will be looked after by a separate Department within AIFF. There will be Youth Directors appointed by the AIFF at youth level also.

(e) All India Football Federation (AIFF), an autonomous organization exists and has been recognized as National Sports Federation for the game of football.